

1 for February issue.

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Lung Cancer In South China

GUANGZHOU, SOUTH CHINA—After the implementation of certain precautions to diminish industrial smoke and descending dust, the quantity of SO_2 and dust in the air has decreased gradually each year here. However, the mortality rate from lung cancer is still increasing, indicating that there may be important carcinogenic factors existing aside from industrial air pollution. In response to this situation, scientists of Guangzhou Pulmonary Cancer Research Center have collected and analyzed data on the potential risk factors for lung cancer, such as population density in the city, the annual amount of tobacco sold, and the amount of coal and petroleum used.

Air pollution inside a group of 20 houses selected from four regions of the city was investigated. Air samples taken in the rooms were found to contain a higher concentration of SO_2 , TSP, and particularly B(a)P than in the open air. Houses with similar types of architecture were selected for a comparative study of how air pollution is influenced by the use of coal stoves or liquefied petroleum gas for cooking. Air samples from kitchens were taken during cooking and measured for concentrations of SO_2 and CO.

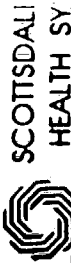
The tested concentrations of SO_2 and CO in the coal burning kitchens were $1.351 \pm 1.167 \text{ mg/m}^3$ and $24.48 \pm 21.69 \text{ mg/m}^3$ respectively, while those of the kitchens using liquefied petroleum gas were $0.099 \pm 0.103 \text{ mg/m}^3$ and $7.77 \pm 7.84 \text{ mg/m}^3$. It is evident that coal burning possesses greater potential danger for air pollution.

The relative risk of lung cancer death of inhabitants with a "most often" history of contact with coal smoke was 1.71. Females living in a smoky environment here run a relative risk of lung cancer even higher than that of tobacco consumption. Because most of the house-cleaning and cooking is done by housewives in China, lung cancer among females is increasing.

Since 1956, most of the inhabitants have changed their habits of using grass and wood for fuel and instead burn bituminous coal for cooking. The small-sized stoves used are essentially without a chimney, and coal smoke floats motionless in the humid South China air. The overcrowded population in the residential areas run a strong risk of lung cancer from the contaminated air. Scientists of the Research Center are advising people to alter the construction of their stoves and to replace the use of bituminous coal for cooking with other energy sources; otherwise, lung cancer prevention activities will be less effective. □

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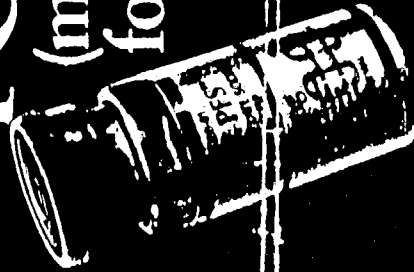
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